

A Leadership Perspective

Gen Duane H. Cassidy

As the Air Force prepares for the complex challenges of the twenty-first century, our success depends on the strength of our leadership. There is absolutely no substitute for leadership in our business and therefore the development of future leaders is a vital task. My 34 years of service have convinced me that there are no experts on the subject of leadership, but I *have* observed several characteristics that seem to be common to successful leaders. Those characteristics are integrity, selflessness, and energy—let me share my thoughts on them with you.

The bedrock of successful leadership has always been integrity—both in the personal and the professional sides of life. Former Air Force chief of staff Gen David C. Jones said,

Integrity is certainly not a unique military attribute, but stakes are higher in our business than in almost any other. We must be right, we must be competent, we must admit our mistakes and correct them when they do occur, and above all we must never permit either the fact or image of duplicity to taint our honor. The watchword must be, as always, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

The reason this is true is that Air Force leaders must accomplish their missions through Air Force people—and our people excel when they trust their leaders. That trust is a fragile commodity and is built upon the confidence that the leader is acting in the best interest of the followers—that he or she will serve the group without sacrificing the rights of the individual. Therefore, a leader must not only set high standards, but must, by commitment and example, live up to the same standards. If you set the right example, you won't need to worry about the rules, or as former Army chief of staff Gen W. C. Westmoreland stated, "Inevitably in the turmoil of times, every soldier will be confronted by situations which test his character. On these occasions, he must stand on his principles; for these are the crucial episodes that determine the worth of a man."

Gen Duane H. Cassidy became commander in chief, Military Air-lift Command, in September 1985. A command pilot and senior navigator, he holds a parachutist badge and has more than 8,000 flying hours. He has spent most of his career in key command, staff, and flying positions in MAC. His decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, and the Air Medal.

In addition to integrity, leaders must be selfless. Simply stated, this means putting your own personal desires second to a higher cause or to other people. We must be selfless because we are in a life and death business—our success guarantees freedom for all Americans—our failure is unconscionable. Selflessness creates the group atmosphere, the team spirit we need to make a military organization capable of limitless activity—rather than one that waits for someone else to get the job done.

Leaders must realize that there are other things more important than their own comfort, their own self-aggrandizement, or their own self-satisfaction. Those things are not important, but rather the importance lies with the people and the mission—leading others to incredible heights or watching them accomplish a difficult mission through teamwork. Granted, the idea of selflessness is not particularly new—nor is it complex—it's just the opposite of selfishness. Selfless leaders think about how to make the unit, the Air Force, or the country a better place. They put their effort into the larger problems—doing things for other people, showing others more concern than for their own careers.

Truthfully, I have found that this selflessness—this concern for other people—consumes much of your time. You can spend a lot of time sitting and listening to someone else's problems, and that is time that will be taken away from your own personal life. But, that sacrifice can also be a great investment and bring rich dividends. Actually, everything you are, you owe to the Air Force anyway, so it is okay to give some of that back.

Selflessness also means you're not so egocentric that you're unwilling to ask for help. My point here is that you can get help from places you just don't realize. One of the most important lessons I learned in my life did not come from the leadership courses I took, nor from all of the four-star generals I worked for, but it came from a chief master sergeant at McChord, the first sergeant of the squadron I commanded as a lieutenant colonel. I had been in command for a short time and had been trying to learn all the names, attending all the parties, and trying to get to know "my" squadron.

One day he walked into my office, shut the door behind him, cleared his throat and said simply, "This squadron needs a commander, not a buddy," and then quietly left. That experience showed me that you learn about leadership from everybody, and all the time. From your peers, from the NCOs, from your boss, and you'll continue to learn all the time. Sometimes that involved listening, not talking, like

when your boss calls to talk. Through the years I have observed lots of people who have passed up perfectly good opportunities to keep their mouths shut.

Another trademark of successful leaders is energy. Leadership is hard work! Motivating others, developing plans and executing them, focusing resources and taking care of your people takes a significant level of effort. Examples that come immediately to mind are all leaders who exhibited unbounded amounts of energy. They had an ability to keep going—to do more than everyone else. People like Curtis LeMay, Grace Hopper, Charlie Gabriel, Larry Welch, and Bob Hope. Every successful person has been able to produce at the right time. These leaders are not workaholics; in fact, some are a little lazy. But they know how to get the most out of themselves at the right time. It's a matter of time management. It's a matter of energy management. Successful leaders don't keep pushing themselves at maximum velocity—they save themselves for the big pushes. It is also important to use your energy for your own job. There will always be plenty of work to do. When you move up to

a higher position, quit doing what you did before—if you are doing someone else's job, who will do yours?

Finally, the leaders of tomorrow's Air Force must remember the difference between leadership and the mirror image that we have named management. British Field Marshal Lord Slim penned the following words on the realities of that difference. He said,

There is a difference between leadership and management. The leader and the men who follow him represent one of the oldest, most natural and most effective of all human relationships. The manager and those he manages are a later product with neither so romantic nor so inspiring a history. Leadership is of the spirit, compounded of personality and vision. Its practice is an art. Management is of the mind, more a matter of accurate calculations, statistics, methods, timetables, and routine. Its practice is a science. Managers are necessary. Leaders are essential.

All I have observed throughout my career affirms those words—"Managers are necessary; Leaders are *essential*." Management is cold and calculating, but leadership goes much deeper—it comes from your heart.